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CHARGE

OF THE

Lord Bishop of *Chester*:

Not spoken, but given to the

CLERGY,

On their being call'd, at the

VISITATION

Begun at *CHESTER* on *The 17th* Day of
June 1747.

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A
C H A R G E
O F T H E

Lord Bishop of *CHESTER*, &c.

Reverend Brethren,

I HAVE heretofore given you my Thoughts of the Nature and Importance of the *Clerical Function*. I have signified the Care and Difficulties which attend a faithful Discharge of it; together with the happy Effects which will attend the sincere discharge of our Duty.

I HAVE taken Notice to you of the daring Steps of some, who have been, and yet are endeavouring to infuse Prejudices into the People, against the Persons and Profession of the *Clergy*.

THEY have represented us as Useless and Burdensome, as Idle and Superficial in our ministerial Performances; which, however true it may be in regard to some particular Persons (and, *woe to them by whom the Offence cometh,*) yet surely, it is an unjust Imputation on the Body of the *Clergy*.

I HAVE taken Occasion from thence to shew what an Incitement this Accusation is, to all the Governors and Pastors of the Church

to be very attentive and diligent in their respective Stations, in order to counter-work the Poison of these Men. It is indeed, an awakening Call to every one of us, to be making *full Proof of our Ministry, to take heed to our selves, and to our Flocks*, lest by the Success these Deceivers may meet with, the end be Confusion, and every evil Work.

IT is in the Power of the *Clergy*, by the blessing of GOD accompanying their Endeavours, to obviate this Evil. If they be living Patterns of all those common Graces required from every Christian, and add to them the particular Ornaments of their Function, Diligence, Faithfulness, and Prudence; there will be no just Reason to fear the People's going astray, or being *carried about with every Wind of Doctrine*.

IT is some of those Duties last generally mention'd, I propose to say something of; and I chuse to do it, by putting this Paper into your Hands, instead of delivering it by Word of Mouth, my Strength not permitting me to undergo that Labour, and to discharge the Work of Confirmation in the course of this Visitation.

PREACHING God's Word is a principal Part of our Duty. As we are to go before our People in the way to Life eternal, we must teach them to walk by the Rule of GOD's Will, explaining and applying his Holy Word to them, and making use of such Subjects of Discourse, as may make them wise unto Salvation. And doubtless, the effectual way to this happy End, is not to frame such Discourses as may shew the Learning and Dexterity of the Preacher, but such as tend to make the Hearers wise and understanding Christians.

AND as Care must be taken to advance no Doctrine, or Duty, but what corresponds with the Word of GOD; so, among other Arguments to shew the Obligation of believing, and doing what is required, we should not forget the enforcing of it by Scripture Proofs.

COMMON Auditories are not capable of the force of Reasoning from the nature of Things. They cannot deduce Truth, from
Truth,

Truth, by a train of Consequences. Want of natural Capacity, or want of Education, makes this the Case of the Body of the People in all Parishes; and it is most reasonable, (I may say, it is Justice due to them,) to consider this their unavoidable Condition, in the Addresses we make to them; and especially, when the matter is of such Importance as the knowing the Will of God, and doing it.

BUT, tho' their Heads are not open enough for close and strict Reasoning, yet they can easily apprehend a plain Truth, and a plain Text of Scripture, for the Support of that Truth.

BESIDES, there is that Power and Efficacy in GOD's Word, as is not to be found in the acutest human Reasoning; and there is good Ground to hope, that GOD will work more effectually on the Mind, by the secret Motions of his holy Spirit, from such Testimonies as are taken from his own Oracles, than from what can be suggested by the wisest Man, on any Subject of saving Importance. And there is not any Thing more certain, that unless the Grace of GOD attends our best Instructions, we may Preach, and others may Hear, but it will be without any good Effect, *Paul may Plant, and Appollos may Water, but it is God who must give Increase*; and this points out to all, both *Clergy*, and *Laity*, the necessity of devout Prayer to GOD for his Blessing on Preaching, Reading, and Hearing his holy Word; as it does the Wisdom and Piety on our Part, frequently to exhort our Hearers, not to neglect so important a Duty.

AND to induce them to a serious Regard to the necessary Duty of private Prayer, the Clergy's reading the publick Prayers of the Church with Gravity, Deliberation, and Devotion, is very expedient. The careless, desultory, and indevout reading of our excellent Liturgy, (as the Manner of some is) renders it contemptible to many, and defeats the Ends of it on more, who attend our Churches.

I THEREFORE Advise, and Admonish every Clergyman to perform the publick Offices of the Church, as in the Presence of the GREAT GOD; and in such Manner as may raise a pious

Attention in their respective Congregations. There is less need for me to enlarge on this Head, because I have long ago taken Notice of it, which is, I presume, in the Hands of the greatest part of the Clergy.

THE Administration of the Sacraments is another Part of the ministerial Office.

BAPTISM being the Door, by which we enter into the Fold, or Church of Christ, and implying a federal Engagement to behave as becomes the Members of it, it seems highly reasonable, it shou'd be administred in a publick Manner.

ACCORDINGLY, our Church requires it shou'd be so administred; unless there be a particular Occasion to vary, and justify the Practice otherwise: And where Necessity is the Case, Circumstances must be dispens'd with.

BUT I fear, Necessity is too oft pleaded when other Motives are the real Cause of departing from the general Rule. This requires Prudence in a Minister to find out the Truth of the Case, as well as he can; and Resolution to adhere to the Rule prescribed, where departing from it does not appear to be reasonable.

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper calls likewise for our Attention. Private Sacraments of this kind are sometimes proper; and we have an Office for private Communions, as we have for private Baptisms.

BUT what I apprehend to be guarded against, is, the Administration of that sacred Ordinance to particular Persons under some particular Circumstances. There are some who Communicate to qualify for some secular Employment, Civil, or Military; and perhaps never do it but on such an Occasion. And, these are of two Sorts; some who do not hold constant Communion with our Church; and some who do. The former not being directly under my present Intention, I will only say, that such Practice implies the lawfulness of Communicating with us; and where such occasional Communion is Lawful, I apprehend that constant Communion is a Duty. This Position is laid down by that learned Prelate

late of our Church BISHOP STILLINGFLEET, and I think well supported by him in his Controversy with our dissenting Brethren.

I HAVE no Occasion here to say, what the Requisites necessary to worthy Communicating are. The last Words of our Catechism tells us that, in a concise and judicious manner.

As there is sometimes too much Reason to fear the want of such Requisites, on the Occasions before-mention'd, and that ends different from the original Institution, may be chiefly in view, and very notorious Immorality may sometimes be imputed to the Party, I will not take upon me to determine, how far the Law will justify or condemn a Clergyman for rejecting such a Person from the Lord's Table. One thing I will say as my own Opinion, that the Holy Sacrament being made a Test, I think it might have been of good Effect, if by a proper Clause, there had been Provision made for the Peace and Safety of a conscientious Clergyman, who may think that he ought to regard the pious Direction of the Rubrick before the Communion Service, relating to notorious evil Livers. By this, the Minister has a Power to repel such from the Lord's Table, (subject to the prudent Limitation of his acquainting the Ordinary with it,) whereas by the Law before hinted at, he may be subject to a ruinous Prosecution for doing what he is persuaded is his Duty.

AGAIN. The Application of this Sacrament to sick and dying Persons is an Affair, which sometimes demands the serious Consideration of a Clergyman.

WHEN any who have led careless, or very vicious Lives, are visited with Sickness, and fear of Death seizeth them, desire, (and perhaps their Friends about them are importunate) to receive the Sacrament, great Prudence and sound Judgment are needful in the Minister. A good Man will be much concern'd on such Occasions. Pity, and Charity on one Hand, and the Honour and Regard due to Christ's Institution on the other; the fear of *casting Pearls before Swine*, and the importunity of a very ignorant and wicked
Liver,

Liver, make this a matter of so delicate a nature, as calls for no little share of Wisdom and cautious Behaviour.

WHAT to do, must be left to the discretion of the Minister; who, whether he complies, or refuses, may not be without Anxieties, nor escape Reflections from the partial and censorious World.

IN Cases of this nature, I desire to suggest one thing, which possibly may be of some good Effect.

IF the Minister, by explaining the nature of the Sacrament, and the manner of it's working to the good of the Receiver; if by representing to the sick Person the deceitfulness of his own Heart, God's readiness to pardon truly penitent Sinners, and that Divine Mercy is not confin'd to outward Ordinances: If, I say, from these, and the like Topicks, such an habitual Sinner can be prevail'd with to throw himself at his Saviour's Feet, as unworthy the Crumbs under his Table, it may give Pleasure to the Minister; and be of more Advantage to the sick Person, whether he lives or dies, than the administration of the Sacrament may afford him.

IT deserves Consideration, how much a precipitate Use of Christ's Ordinance tends to corrupt the Minds of ignorant People about the Nature and Efficacy of that, and other Gospel Ordinances; and to encourage some, who may have more Knowledge, but no better Morals, to neglect their Duty in time of Health, and trust to a deceitful late Repentance.

VISITING the Sick is another Branch of the Clergy's Business, and requires Seriousness and Discretion.

As they are Shepherds, the whole Flock is the Object of their Providence; but if any be Sick, or in danger of Miscarrying, that becomes their more immediate Concern.

THAT Sick Persons ought to send for the Spiritual Physician, is out of Question. The Scripture expressly enjoins it. But this I fear is commonly neglected, till Distempers grow strong, the Patient weak, and the Faculties of Body and Mind so impair'd, that due attention to Prayer, and proper Examination, and Advice, cannot be comply'd with. For this Reason, it will shew good nature,

ture, and true concern for the eternal Welfare of his People, if the Minister (on his knowledge of the Sickneſs) viſits the afflicted Party without being call'd upon.

THAT all ſick Perſons ought not to be dealt with in the ſame manner, is very certain.

SAYING ſome Prayers, and then haſting perhaps away, is by no means viſiting the Sick. The Miniſter, as far as he can, muſt know the ſpiritual State of the afflicted Perſon. He muſt rouse the Conſciences of ſome by the *Terrors of the Lord, and ſupport the feeble-minded* by the Promiſes of the Goſpel. Every wiſe and faithful Paſtor will know how to conduct himſelf on thoſe Occaſions, and not fail in ſuitable Applications.

I HAVE oft recommended to you, the Care of the young of your Flocks; and I deſire to inculcate it as the beſt merely humane means to promote Religion. I wou'd have no Diſtruſt of your conſcientious Regard to that excellent Work, the Work of Catechiſing. Tender Minds will retain the firſt Impreſſions, which will be of greateſt Conſequence in Life. Happy for them whoſe natural Pravity is check'd in time; and happy for them too, who by GOD's Bleſſing, are the Inſtruments of it. Unleſs Parents and Miniſters uſe their Endeavours to that purpoſe, Time will ſhew, and unhappy Experience will prove, that Youth will grow too headſtrong to be directed in the Paths of Virtue; and too wiſe in their own Conceit to be taught by others.

BESIDES a Conformity to the Rules of Catechiſing preſcrib'd by our Church, I wou'd recommend the viſiting now and then the *Schools* in your reſpective Pariſhes, to ſee what Care is there taken of inſtilling Religious Principles into the Children.

IN all School Licences there is a Clauſe obliging the Maſters to teach the Catechiſm, and to attend their Scholars to the publick Service of the Church on the Lord's Day, and other Holy-Days. Where this is neglected, the Miniſter and Church-Wardens may, and ought to preſent the Offender according to the 79th Canon, that proper Admonition may iſſue, and farther Notice be taken, if occaſion ſhall require it.

IT wou'd alſo be a good Work, if the Maſters and Miſtreſſes of
 B Schools

Schools were exhorted to use daily Prayers with their Scholars, and oblige them to learn some short Prayers for their private use, suitable to their Ages; and, as the same Canon piously directs, train them up with such Sentences of Scripture, as shall be most expedient to induce them to all Godliness. And, because there is no Parochial Provision by Law, for educating the Children of the Poor, in paying for their Learning, or buying useful Books for them, and where no particular Charity provides for that purpose, I think that a share of the Offertory would be a proper Application in that way.

I SUBMIT it to my *Brethren's* Consideration, how much good wou'd arise from a due Care of our Youth, of all conditions in Life, in the Nurseries of Education, whether greater, or less, by the fore-mention'd Means. This wou'd not fail of being a happy Introduction to Children for their examination by the Minister, when they are of Age for publick Catechising. Some knowledge of the Rudiments of Religion in their early Years, wou'd make the Minister's Enquiry and Application in the Catechetical way more beneficial to young Persons, and give greater Satisfaction to himself. I know this by Experience, and Experience will best shew it. This wou'd effectually prepare our Youth for Confirmation, and then for receiving real Benefit from other Ordinances of our holy Religion.

IT is the want of instilling Christian Principles betimes, that too many of our Pulpit Discourses are thrown away on a great part of our Hearers; that our excellent publick Prayers are so little attended to, and understood; that many never, and many so seldom present themselves at the Lord's Table; and that we see so many shamefully deficient in the Duties of private and social Life. Whereas, by early Instructions, prudently carried on; by explaining the Sense, as well as repeating the Words; by *Line upon Line, here a little and there a little*; in due Time every Chapter read, every Sermon preached, wou'd be competently understood; and progressive Improvements made in the Knowledge and Practice of Religion and Virtue.

FOR, what way so likely as this, to that desirable end? It wou'd be difficult for those who are thus train'd up, to lose the Effects of it while they live. No! The Seeds of Religion sown in Time,
wou'd

wou'd take *Root downwards, and bear Fruit upwards*. Those first Principles wou'd disturb a Person in any approach to Vice and Infidelity; and in case of being at any Time strongly tempted, or overcome, may be the happy Occasion by GOD's Assistance, of recalling him to Repentance and a better Mind.

GIVE me leave to observe farther, that it wou'd much promote the Cause of Religion, if the Clergy wou'd be importunate with the Heads of Families, to practice Family Devotion. Every Householder is a kind of Priest to offer up daily Sacrifices of Prayer and Thanksgiving to GOD. This Exercise wou'd not only testify the Piety of the Governor, but create a Sense of GOD, and Goodness in the several Members of the little Society under his Roof. 'Tis the way to make Children dutiful, and Servants faithful: And when Providence shall dispose them into like Stations, the pious Precedents, will probably, be imitated; and by that, the World wou'd be growing better, and future Generations call *those Blessed*, that have gone before them.

THE adding some Portion of Scripture to Family Prayer, wou'd improve the means of its Edification. Reading of GOD's Word, and humble Addresses to the Throne of Grace, wou'd do good indeed. The Scripture is a *Pearl of Price*, worth the *selling all to Purchase it*. Was it esteemed as it deserves, barbarous Ignorance, Infidel Notions, and detestable Practices wou'd soon be *as Chaff before the Wind*, scatter'd from amongst us.

BY the due Use of holy Scripture in the Way I am speaking of, some Light wou'd dart into ignorant Minds; some Memorandums of Matters of Faith, and Practice, wou'd adhere to them, which wou'd be good helps in hearing Sermons, in reading good Books, and in making a stand against bad Examples, and all allurements to Sin.

HAVING mention'd good Books, wou'd Parents and Masters of Families be advis'd by their respective Pastors to keep bad ones out of their Dwellings, it wou'd help to prevent a corruption of Morals, and bad Notions. We are pester'd with vile Books; some leading to Infidelity, some to Immorality: And indeed, what promotes the one, promotes the other. Obscene Songs are the Entertainment of too many young People. Scurrilous Papers against the Persons, the

Profession, and the legal Rights of the Clergy, are industriously dispers'd, and as readily approv'd by many of all Ranks.

To exterminate utterly this malignant Poison is scarcely to be hop'd for ; but to prevent in some measure the pernicious Influence of it, is not impossible. Publick and private Admonitions against it, Exhortations to read the Word of GOD, and other good Books, which wou'd settle the Faith and improve the Morals of our People, wou'd bring bad ones into disrepute, and make them treated with the Contempt, which they deserve.

IF any thing I have said, should be thought too low for a Clergyman to employ himself, and his Time about, I hope it will be consider'd, that no Pains shou'd be thought too much, or too mean, by which we may do good ; nor wou'd I suggest any thing as a Duty, which I am not fully perswaded, has a natural tendency to that purpose ; which, I trust, will render what I have said, the more acceptable, and be a sufficient Plea for my Recommendation of it.

WE read, that our great Lord and Master did not think it too much, to stoop to the meanest Offices of doing good to Mankind ; and he told his Disciples, who were to carry on the Work of his Ministry, that his Example was for their Imitation.

HAVING given my Sentiments of a few things, with regard to the People of your Charge, you will bear with me, my Brethren, in just mentioning some things of another Nature to you.

I HAVE very great Pleasure, when I find the Clergy circumspect, in giving their Hands to Testimonials for Holy Orders, for Institutions, Licences, and on other Occasions ; as it is a Trouble, whenever I see it done Inconsiderately, or Unfaithfully.

IN the Year 1727, the late Archbishop of this Province, in concurrence with the other Bishops of it, published certain Articles relating to the Discipline of the Church, which I then printed, and sent to every Church and Chapel Minister in the Diocese.

AMONG them, there is one Article, obliging the Bishop to admit no Letters Testimonial on any Occasion whatsoever, unless it be therein declared by those who shall sign them — “ *That they have personally known the Life and Behaviour of the Person for the Time by them Certifed ; and do believe in their Conscience,* “ *that*

*“ that he is qualified for the Order or Employment, to which he
“ designs to be admitted.*

THE last Clause in these Words, is, I think, totally omitted in Testimonials; which I readily impute to Inadvertency, and not to Design.

BUT, I now recommend it to the Care of every Clergyman, not to Sign any Letter to the Purposes before mentioned, *where that Clause is not inserted.*

WHEN this comes to be known, it will, I dare say, save the Clergy the trouble of many impertinent Applications; induce Candidates to mind their Study, and Behaviour; and prevent a Labour, I too oft have, of enquiring into the Qualifications of some, who apply for dispatch on such imperfect Credentials as they send, or bring with them.

THERE is another Article among those I mention'd, which is ——— *“ That the Bishop shall make diligent Enquiry concerning Cu-
“ rates in his Diocese, and proceed to Ecclesiastical Censures against
“ those, who shall presume to serve Cures, without being duly Li-
“ cenc'd thereunto: As also against all such Incumbents, who shall
“ receive and employ them without first obtaining such Licence. —*

This is a Rule of Importance, tending to preserve Order, and prevent Trouble. Unfit Persons are usually most importunate to obtain Favours in the Way I am speaking of; and when they are inconsiderately granted, the Ordinary, whose Authority was not regarded, has sometimes the disagreeable Work of inhibiting, or displacing the Intruder.

As an adjunct to what precedes, it may be proper to observe, that the Act of Parliament of the Twelfth of Queen ANNE, for the better maintenance of Curates within the Church of *England*, has not a due regard paid to it by some Incumbents.

THE Act affects chiefly, such Rectors, or Vicars, as are not alway resident. And, because such Cures must be supply'd, I must not here omit the shameful Practice of some Incumbents. I mean such, who having two Livings, reside on one, but have no residing Curate at the other, and seldom, or scarce ever, do any Duty there themselves. And others there be, who tho' they have but one

Church, yet live out of the Parish, and almost totally neglect the performing any Offices in it, living in such an idle, and indolent manner, by turning the whole Cure over to a Curate, as if they were no more oblig'd to regard the Souls committed to their Charge, than if they never had heard, there was such a Body of People. How such Clergymen can in Honour, Justice, and Conscience, live by the Labours of their Parishioners, without spending Time and Personal Pains among them, I leave to their cool and retired Thoughts. These things call for this short Animadversion, and I do it with a kind Intent, to prevent farther Notice of such irregular and scandalous Behaviour. That Law provides for the proper support of the Curate. The appointment of his Salary is vested in the Bishop, with respect to the Circumstances of the Benefice; and *in Case any difference shall arise about Payment of the Stipend, the Bishop shall determine it in a summary Way.*

WHAT I wou'd take Notice of from hence is, that notwithstanding this plain Rule, some Incumbents not only take upon them to appoint Curates in such Churches without being Licenc'd, but fix their Salaries also, without any application to the Diocesan, as the Law directs.

ONE thing more occurs to me from the Practice of too many of the Clergy, repugnant to that Canon, which enjoins *Decency in their Apparel.*

THAT Seventy Fourth Canon requires such Apparel from the *Prelacy and Clergy, as is agreeable to the antient Churches of Christ, and that the Clergy may be known to the People; and receive the Honour and Estimation due to the special Messengers and Ministers of Almighty God.*

IT is surely reasonable, that Clergymen should be distinguished by a Habit expressing Gravity and Humility, without Nicety and Affectation. Nor do I see, why they shou'd look for a particular Respect when they do not carry any Badge of their Sacred Profession about them.

OUR learned and laborious Antiquary Mr. *Bingham*, among other Matters relating to the Decorum of the Clergy, *calls the Habit their Guard, or Outworks.*

IT is indeed a proper Defence against rude Treatment; and must be a Check to attempts of that sort, where Men are not abandon'd to all common Civility.

THIS is the View of our Mother the *Church of England*, who approves no *Superstition*, or *Will-worship* in any Dress; but however, loves to have *all Things done Decently, and in Order*, and surely, it must be the Duty of her profess'd Sons to pay Obedience to her prudent Command.

THE distinction of *Secular and Regular*, or *Religious*, is well known among the Popish Clergy. In allusion to that, I cannot but observe, that, the more I see the Clergy of our Church disuse their Habit, the more *Secular* they grow in the worst Acceptation of that Term; and less *Regular* or *Religious* in the best Sense of those Terms.

BY what I have said, my main Design is, to move you, and myself, to a laudable Concern for the Honour and Interest of Religion; the *Interest* not of a *Party* or *Seet*, not an Affection for a mere *Name* or *Profession*, but for *Faith* and *Holiness*; for the Power and Efficacy of *Christianity*, which can render us acceptable to GOD. And let me just say, that this Power and Life of *Christianity* is the *Thing* which our *particular Church* has in View. If we attend to her Liturgy and Offices, if we read well her Articles, and Homilies, and examine the Order and Form of her Ordination, this amiable and excellent Design will be found to shine forth as her great Ornament. And I wou'd to GOD, that all who profess to be her *Ministers* and *Members*, wou'd not only conform to her external Rites and Ceremonies which are but few, but adorn themselves with that *Beauty of Holiness*, which she recommends to all of her Communion.

AND my *Brethren*, as it is our Honour and Felicity to be Ministers of this holy and *reform'd Church*, may we not only profess a just esteem for it, but also apply to all serious and proper Means for it's Preservation.

THIS *Church* as well as all other *reform'd Churches*, has an inveterate and common Enemy; alway ready, alway watchful to destroy it. Popish Power, and Policy, have been and still are at work to root out the Protestant Religion, and with that, all Civil Liberty. But GOD has yet preserv'd those Blessings to this Kingdom.

A late violent Attempt has been made to strip us of these our inestimable Enjoyments; but the wicked Design is frustrated, and they who engag'd in it, are *fallen into the Pit they made for others*. Our future Security depends under GOD, on our own Behaviour. If we unite against all the Stratagems of our Enemies to divide and weaken us: If all Orders of Men wou'd adhere to the great Bulwark of our Safety, the *Protestant Succession* to the Crown of these Realms; if they wou'd use their Liberty without being Licentious, and add to their Holy Profession a suitable Life and Behaviour, we shou'd have good Hope, that the same good Providence which has hitherto interpos'd for our Preservation in all Times of Danger, will not leave us nor forsake us.

To sum up the whole with regard to the Clergy in particular. If both the Governors, and Pastors of the Church will fix their Eye on the main end of their Holy Function: If they will instruct their People in the saving Truths of the Gospel: If they endeavour to engage them by the most likely Methods, in the Love, and Practice of sincere Holiness: If they have a benevolent Heart towards all Men, and bear an affectionate Regard for the eternal Salvation of the Souls committed to their Charge: If they set the World about them Examples worthy their Imitation: If they *take heed*, that they give no Occasion for *the way of Truth to be evil spoke of*: If in all their Conversation, they manifest a prudent Zeal for GOD's Honour, and the glorious Cause of *Christianity*, they will be doing the highest Honour, and greatest Good to themselves, as well as the best Service to their fellow Christians. By these Means, they will abate the Insolence at least, if not the Hatred, which too many shew to their Persons, and Profession. They will have Reason to hope, that the *Work of GOD* will *prosper in their Hands*. They will have the Testimony of their Conscience, to sustain them under all the impotent Malice, Obloquy, and ungrateful Treatment, they may meet with, and find at last, abundant Compensation for their *Labour of Love*, from the gracious Hands of their great Lord and Master JESUS CHRIST, *who will come to render to every Man according to his Work*.

F I N I S.



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